



Do you think we're coming to the end of the world?

Let's see. Just this week we had an earthquake in Los Angeles. A couple months ago there was one in China that killed over 80,000 people. We've had a cyclone in Burma that took the lives of nearly as many. We've had flooding in Iowa and Missouri and tornadoes in unusual places. Last year a major interstate bridge fell into the river. We are just a few years removed from Hurricane Kristina. The list of natural disasters could go on. (And I didn't even mention the general moral decline and widespread attraction of "spiritual" leaders teaching things contrary to the Bible.)

Here's what God says in the Bible...

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

[4] Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. [5] For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. [6] You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. [7] Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. [8] All these are the beginning of birth pains. Matthew 24:3-8

Jesus tells His disciples that natural disasters and wars *are* signs of the coming of The End, kind of like the start of birth pains signal the coming of a baby. i.e. When you see these signs be on your guard, but there's still more to happen before The End actually arrives.

Jesus goes on to say...

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.... "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. [43] But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Matthew 24:36, 42-44

In Old Testament times God's people commonly viewed natural disasters and difficult times as signs that God was trying to get their attention. In our recent Tuesday Bible study in Haggai God flat-out took credit for such things:

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways... "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

Haggai 1:5-11

The Israelites had gotten so distracted with their own lives that they had neglected to rebuild the Temple. God tells them that He's brought famine and drought and general tough times as a direct result

of their misplaced priorities. These have come to wake them up and motivate them to repent and get back to making Him the priority in their lives.

So, the idea that natural disasters in our day are signs God is using to get our attention is a valid thought. However, Jesus' conversation with His disciples about The End also definitely indicates:

- 1) That no one is going to be able to know for sure when that day will come and
- 2) Of greatest importance with regard to The End is making a point to always be ready (instead of trying to figure out when it's coming).

Maybe the best thing for all of us to do is what God said in Haggai, "*Give careful thought to your ways,*" and make sure we are following God and making Him our priority in life.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net